

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Support of Regional Healthcare Improvement
Recommendations for the National Quality Forum from Community Alliances

February 3, 2011

By Christopher Queram and Mary M. Maher

In Support of Regional Healthcare Improvement

Recommendations for the National Quality Forum from Community Alliances

Private sector coalitions created to promote the idea of efficient, affordable, quality healthcare have existed in the United States for decades. Whether led by the business sector, health-focused organizations, consumers or an amalgam of groups interested in better healthcare, the resulting community alliances emphasize local solutions and tangible outcomes. Connected and knowledgeable about local issues, such alliances are in a position to influence the change inherent in the current national mandate for healthcare reform.

We contacted 14 large and medium-size community healthcare alliances involved in promoting performance measures, public reporting and other quality improvement tools to ask where assistance and support from the National Quality Forum (NQF) might enhance their success in the post-reform environment. Our goal was to give NQF a clear idea of how to connect and be useful to these groups, and help them learn from one another.

Many of the community alliances represented in our research have reputations for innovation and results that reach beyond their states and regions. All are distinguished by energetic leadership and an unshakable commitment to having an impact on the future of affordable quality care—in their communities and nationally. They are alert to the tenor of the debate on healthcare quality and cost going on in their communities and do their part to contribute reasoned arguments and ideas to the dialogue.

As a group, the alliances recognize that healthcare is local but that reform requires a unified national movement. All have strong links with the national networks and programs they represent, some are NQF members, and they actively seek professional connections among colleagues in other collaboratives.

Defining NQF's Value to Community Alliances

Local collaboratives look to NQF for performance measures that represent current, evidence-based standards. They encourage the organization to expand those they endorse, and simplify composition of and access to all endorsed measures. Weigh in on the national front, they say, to secure support for performance measurement and public reporting from hospital and medical groups that continue to influence their members' lack of cooperation at the local level. Be a resource for local alliances, a conduit to help them reach out and learn from groups with similar challenges or opportunities. Listen to what local alliances and collaboratives are accomplishing and involve them in testing new tools and ideas.

The majority of leaders contacted for this research appreciated the chance to advise NQF and put their recommendations into context with stories of challenge and success. But more than one voiced a caution that surveys and white papers not become a substitute for action. The CEOs, executive directors and program leaders who contributed to this research effort hope to partner with NQF on moving needed changes in healthcare forward.

Recommendations and Associated Opportunities

| RECOMMENDATION | GOAL | OPPORTUNITIES |
|--|--|---|
| Build support among leadership of national groups representing physicians and hospitals | Influence broader acceptance of local quality measurement/reporting/improvement initiatives by providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify physician leaders willing to address their local peers on benefits of performance measurement/reporting -Create tool kit on national quality strategy for local alliances |
| Overcome reluctance of national health plans to engage with local alliances | Increase veracity and size of local multi-payer database | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create the “business case” for local plan affiliates to share claims data -Engage national health plans in NQF strategies |
| Connect regional alliances with each other through quality networks | Improve collaborative learning and sharing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Help alliances benchmark their progress against other regions -Become clearinghouse of local strategies, solutions |
| Identify and promote adoption of core measures and take action to endorse additional critical measures | Develop credible standardized measures local alliances can use to expand their efforts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Streamline endorsement process -Create more composite and outcomes measures -Develop more open-source applications -Explore gaps in care for non-Medicare populations |
| Recognize the strength, experience and influence of local alliances | Build stronger movement with national/regional collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tap alliances for ideas and connections -Create a mechanism to leverage alliances as laboratories to test new tools |
| Assist in building the sustainability of local | Help identify and develop funding streams | Identify strategies to help local collaboratives diversify their base |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| alliances | that support existing and new programs | <i>of support</i> |
| Provide strategies for stretching limited resources | Create shared services model to help smaller organizations access specialized resources | <i>Help local alliances identify strategies for efficient operation</i> |

Community Alliances Contributing to This Research

Aligning Forces for Quality South Central Pennsylvania – York, Pennsylvania. *Christine Amy, Project Director*

Hawaii Medical Service Association – Honolulu, Hawaii. *Richard Chung, MD, Senior Vice President*

HealthCare21 – Knoxville, Tennessee. *Jerry Burgess, President and CEO*

Healthy Memphis Common Table – Memphis, Tennessee. *Renee Frazier, Executive Director*

Indiana Health Information Exchange – Indianapolis, Indiana. *Chris Schultz, Vice President & John Kansky, Vice President for Business Development*

Integrated Healthcare Association – Oakland, California. *Tom Williams, Exec Director and Dolores Yanagihara, Director, Pay for Performance Program*

Iowa Healthcare Collaborative – Des Moines, Iowa. *Tom Evans, MD, President/CEO*

New York Quality Alliance – Albany, New York. *Betsy Mulvey, Executive Director*

P2 Collaborative of Western New York – Williamsville, New York. *Shelley Hirschberg, Executive Director; Tracy Sawicki, Consumer Engagement Team Lead [also with Red Cross]; Susan Fenster, Performance Measurement/Public Reporting Team Lead [also with Clinical Support Services]*

Puget Sound Health Alliance – Seattle, Washington. *Susie Dade, Director, Performance Improvement*

Quality Counts – Manchester, Maine. *Ted Rooney, RN, MPH, Aligning Forces for Quality Project Director*

Quality Quest for Health of Illinois – Peoria, Illinois. *Gail Amundson, MD, President and CEO*

St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition/Midwest Health Initiative – St. Louis, Missouri. *Louise Probst, Executive Director*

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center – Lubbock, Texas. *Susan McBride, TTUHSC School of Nursing & Rural Institute REC/West Texas*